FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

VISITOR CENTER EXPANSION

U.S Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve

Purpose and Need: Storage space for museum artifacts and archives does not meet National Park Service those museum standards requiring secured, dedicated and climate controlled storage space. Electrical systems within the Visitor Center are inadequate to handle expanding demands from modern office equipment. The Visitor Center lacks a cooling system and interior temperatures within the public areas of the building often exceed 90° F during summer months. Lack of workspace has required converting employee housing into office space. Existing space limits indoors naturalist programs (including audiovisual programs) to a maximum of ten people at a time.

The monument's current General Management Plan (USDI/NPS 1992) identified many of these same deficiencies with the Visitor Center. The plan designated the Visitor Center area as a "development" zone. The plan also recommended moving the public functions of the existing building to a new structure to be located on a new entrance road east of the existing Visitor Center. Expanding and rehabilitating the existing visitor center was an alternative to that approach discussed in the draft general management plan (USDI/NPS 1991). That alternative was not adopted because it did not address issues related to poor access off the state highway. Subsequently, park management, in consultation with the regional office, determined that greater value and fewer disturbances to the natural resources of the park along with cost savings would be achieved by renovating and expanding the existing visitor center. Decisions resulting from this assessment will be considered an amendment to the 1992 plan.

The National Park Service proposed renovating and building new additions to the visitor center at Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve. The renovations would upgrade existing or add new heating and cooling systems, electrical power components, roof, energy efficiency, and fire sprinkler systems. The additions will provide an indoor setting for interpretive programs (maximum of 1900 square feet-minimum of 990 square feet), storage space for museum artifacts, and workspace for staff (1830 square feet). The design of the additions is intended to compliment but not duplicate the appearance of the existing building. The visitor center complex has been found eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The eligibility of the visitor center complex is based upon being representative of an architectural design style typical of the

National Park Service's Mission 66 Program and the continued integrity the complex as a whole in reflecting the design of that time.

Summary of the Preferred Alternative: The preferred alternative involves additions on the east and west ends of the existing visitor center (VC) as well as major renovation of the roof, electrical and heating and cooling system of the existing building.

The 1830 square foot east addition would house museum collection storage, two offices, a library/meeting room, and janitorial and electrical service areas surrounding a central workroom. This addition would be located flush with the north wall of the existing building and extend an additional 44 feet to the east.

The 682 square foot west addition would house an audiovisual room seating up to 35 persons for public presentations. Included in this addition is extension of the existing 10.5-foot wide vestibule another 28.75 feet across the south end of the addition. This addition would be designed to permit a future 1200 square foot expansion to the north to achieve a seating capacity of up to 65 people. Both additions would be built on a four-inch concrete slab on grade over six inches of granular fill. The VC flat roof would be replaced with a butadiene styrene granulated cap sheet.

The floor plan of the existing building would remain unchanged. New ceiling ducts for the cooling system would be installed throughout the existing building and additions. The one exception would be in the curatorial storage room that would have sidewall grilles. A fire sprinkler system would be installed throughout the existing building and new additions. Windows with moveable panels through the existing building would be replaced with energy efficient double pane glass.

The existing central heating system would be replaced with individual forced air heaters for each workspace. A central forced air evaporative cooling system would be added for all existing public and employee workspace. The evaporative cooling system would also cool all of the new additions with the exception of the museum storage area. The museum storage area would be climate controlled with an air conditioner. Evaporative coolers and air conditioner compressor equipment would be located on the east side of the VC at ground level. Two additional evaporative cooling units supplying the west portion of the building would be located along the north side of the building. The existing brick wall on the east side of the VC would be relocated to screen the view of this utility equipment from the public side (south) of the building. An existing gate and side walk that provides access between the public and administrative side of the wall would be relocated to a position approximately 45 feet east of its current location.

New work and storage space in the east addition would facilitate more efficient arrangement of staff functions. Administrative staff would be relocated to space adjacent to the Superintendent's office, thereby freeing their current office space in the maintenance building for maintenance functions. Relocating the museum collection to dedicated space in the east addition would free space currently serving that function in the Resource Management office.

Alternatives Analyzed in the EA: Alternatives included continued use of the existing building with repairs as needed.

Alternative A represented the "No Action" and served as a baseline comparison with the preferred alternative. In this case no action means no changes to the existing Visitor Center other than routine maintenance. No additions would be built and no changes in the heating/cooling, electrical, roof or fire sprinkler systems would be done.

Rational for Selection of Preferred Alternative: The preferred alternative meets the purpose and need identified in the environmental assessment. It addresses health and safety problems, provides for increased public comfort and understanding of monument resources, safe storage for museum collections, and space for efficient staff operations.

The preferred alternative is also the environmentally preferred alternative. The environmentally preferred alternative is the alternative that will promote the national environmental policy as expressed by §101 of the National Environmental Policy Act. This includes alternatives that:

(1) fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations;
(2) assure for all generations safe, healthful, productive, and esthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings
(3) attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk of health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences;
(4) preserve important historic, cultural and natural aspects of our national heritage and maintain, wherever possible, an environment that supports diversity and variety of individual choice
(5) achieve a balance between population and resource use that will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities; and
(6) Enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.

WHY THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE WILL NOT HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

As defined in 40 CFR §1508.27, significance is determined by examining the following criteria:

Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse

The preferred alternative meets the purpose and need objectives for a public multi-purpose room suitable for presentations, museum storage, and office workspace while avoiding adverse effects on the integrity historically important Mission 66-era building. The footprint of the building will be increased on the east and west sides but the additions have been designed to complement the original design in size, form and materials. The impacts of other alternatives varied and are described in the EA.

Degree of effect on public health or safety

The preferred alternative improves public safety through upgrades to the electrical system, addition of fire suppression systems and addition of a cooling system.

Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

The preferred alternative would affect a building considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Consultation with the Idaho State Historic Preservation Officer concluded that the proposed additions and interior alterations did not constitute an adverse effect as defined in 36 Code of Federal Regulations (Section 800).

Excavation for addition foundations and relocated sewer and water lines could affect unrecorded archeological sites. Site specific cultural resource surveys of the proposed routes for the additions and water/sewer lines revealed no surface indications of sites.

There are no wetlands, prime farmlands, wild and scenic rivers or ecologically critical areas affected by this proposal.

Degree to which effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

The effects of the preferred alternative are not controversial.

Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks

The actions outlined in the preferred alternative are relatively straightforward and the resulting effects well understood. Therefore, there were no highly uncertain or unique or unknown risks identified.

Degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration

The preferred alternative should resolve a long-standing issue identified in the 1992 General Management Plan for CRMO. The action will not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects.

Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts

Other reasonably foreseeable activities include trail construction at the Spatter Cones, replacement of waterlines and concrete vaults, and resurfacing of parking areas and road spurs on a separate section of the monument. All of these would affect the visitor experience to some degree. Construction on the water system project would require closing the North End, including the Group Campsite, to all visitor use through the summer of 2003. The Spatter Cones trail project would require closure of the Spatter Cones trail, parking area, and access to the Big Craters area for much of the summer of 2003. The road-resurfacing project is scheduled for the summer of 2005 and would require closure of the effected parking areas and spurs roads for several weeks. This project is scheduled for construction in 2004.

Degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed on National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

As stated above, the preferred alternative would affect a building considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Consultations with the Idaho State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) began early in the design process and several design options were eliminated from consideration due to their adverse effect on the integrity of the Mission 66 design. Consultation with the SHPO concluded on March 6, 2003 with a determination that the proposed additions and interior alterations did not constitute an adverse effect as defined in 36 Code of Federal Regulations (Section 800).

Degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat

There are no endangered or threatened species directly in the project area. Gray wolves and bald eagles occur in the surrounding area but will not be affected by the project. The nearest sightings of wolves have been more than five miles away and no denning sites are located in the project area. Bald eagles do not nest or feed in the project area.

Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, state, or local environmental protection law

This action violates no federal, state, or local environmental protection laws.
Compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act:
Consultations with the Idaho State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and NPS cultural resource specialists began early in the design process and several design options were eliminated from consideration due to their potential adverse effect on the integrity of the Mission 66 complex. Consultation with the SHPO concluded on March 6, 2003 with a determination that the proposed additions and interior alterations did not constitute an adverse effect as defined in Title 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations (Section 800).

Non-Impairment of Park Resources
In addition to reviewing the list of significance criteria, the National Park Service has determined that implementation of the proposal will not constitute an impairment to Craters of the Moon National Monument's resources and values. This conclusion is based on a thorough analysis of the environmental impacts described in the *Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve,* Visitor Center Expansion and Renovation *EA*, comments received relevant studies, and the professional judgment of the decision-maker guided by the direction in NPS *Management Policies* (NPS, 2000). Although the plan/project has some negative impacts, in all cases these adverse impacts are the result of actions taken to preserve and restore other monument resources and values. Overall, the plan results in benefits to monument resources and values, opportunities for their enjoyment, and it does not result in their impairment.

Mitigation
Mitigation measures associated with the project were developed in the EA and are listed here.

1. Locate construction staging areas away from public areas.
2. Design new additions to maintain the integrity of the structure's eligibility for the National Register.
3. Undertake work on the public areas of the visitor center during "off-season" periods of the year.

4. A construction zone for trenching and installation of the underground service, as well as a staging and stockpiling zone, would be identified and fenced with construction tape or some similar material prior to any construction activity. The fencing would define the zone and confine activity to the minimum area required for construction activities. All protection measures would be clearly stated in the construction specifications and workers would be instructed to avoid conducting activities beyond the zone as defined by the fencing. In addition, the National Park Service would ensure that all contractors and subcontractors are informed that damage to resources outside the scope of work is subject to prosecution, fine, restitution costs, and other penalties.
5. Soil cast aside during trenching would be susceptible to some erosion but standard erosion control measures, such as silt fences, sand bags, or straw bales would be used, as necessary, to minimize any potential soil erosion. To avoid introduction of exotic plant species, no hay bales would be used to control soil erosion. Hay often contains seed of undesirable or harmful alien plant species. Therefore, on a case-by-case basis the following materials may be used for any erosion control dams that may be necessary: rice straw, straws determined by the National Park Service to be weed-free, cereal grain straw that has been fumigated to kill weed seed, and wood excelsior bales.
6. Excavated soil would be used for backfilling the trench.
7. If during construction previously undiscovered archeological resources are discovered, all work in the immediate vicinity of the discovery would be halted until the resources could be identified and documented and an appropriate mitigation strategy developed, if necessary, in consultation with the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office. In the unlikely event that human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony are discovered during construction, provisions outlined in the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (25 USC 3001) of 1990 would be followed.
8. The National Park Service adopted the concept of sustainable design as a guiding principle of facility planning and development. The objectives of sustainability are to design National Park Service facilities to:

- ✓ minimize adverse effects on natural and cultural values,
- ✓ reflect their environmental setting,
- ✓ maintain and encourage biodiversity,
- ✓ construct and retrofit facilities using energy-efficient materials and building techniques,
- ✓ operate and maintain facilities to promote their sustainability, and
- ✓ to illustrate and promote conservation principles and practices through the sustainable design and ecologically sensitive use.

Essentially, sustainability is living within the environment with the least impact on the environment. The proposed action subscribes to and supports the practice of sustainable planning, design, and use of the visitor center/museum.

During construction the Contracting Officer's Technical Representative will implement weed control mitigation measures with assistance from the Resource Management Division. Post-construction the Resource Management Division will be responsible for vegetative plantings and monitoring/control of invasive weeds.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Consultation with representatives of the Idaho State Historic Preservation Officer began during the design phase of the project. The 1992 General Management Plan (GMP) is being updated, and this proposed visitor center project was mentioned during three GMP public scoping\planning workshops conducted in Arco, Carey, and Rupert (all in Idaho) during February 2003. The visitor center expansion and upcoming EA was characterized as an amendment to the 1992 NPS General Management Plan for Craters of the Moon National Monument. No comments were received from the 90 persons attending the workshops regarding the visitor center proposal.

The NPS prepared an EA and released it for public review on March 19, 2003. The EA and a notice of availability were posted on the Craters of the Moon web site on February 6, 2003. A notice of the availability of the EA for a 30-day public review period was published in the *Arco Advertiser* on March 27, 2003 requesting comments by April 28, 2003. That notice provided the Monument office address and phone number and offered to mail copies of the EA to any persons requesting a copy, as well as providing information on how to access the document previously posted to the Monument internet web site.

No requests for the EA were received, and no printed copies were distributed except for a copy provided to the Idaho State Historic Preservation Officer as part of the Section 106 consultation process. As of June 12, 2003 only two comments regarding the proposal had been received. Those comments were from NPS cultural resource advisors and the Idaho State Historic Preservation Officer concern the effects of the project on the Mission 66 headquarters complex and are referenced earlier in this document.

CONCLUSION

The preferred alternative does not constitute an action that normally requires preparation of an environmental impact statement and will not have a significant effect on the human environment. Negative environmental impacts that could occur are minor in intensity and short in duration. There are no significant impacts on public health, public safety, threatened or endangered species, sites or districts listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, or other unique characteristics of the region. No highly uncertain or controversial impacts, unique or unknown risks, significant cumulative effects, or elements of precedence were identified. Implementation of the action will not violate any federal, state, or local environmental protection law. Based on the analysis in the environmental assessment, the capability of mitigation measures to reduce potential impacts, and the results of consultation with other agencies, the National Park Service has determined that an environmental impact statement is not required for this project and thus will not be prepared.

Recommended: _____Date:_____
James A. Morris, Superintendent
Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve

Approved: _____Date:_____
Jonathan B. Jarvis, Regional Director
Pacific West Region